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**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY**

**NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE**

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT UNDER FIRE**

**Explaining How U.S. Forces May Serve Under Foreign Command**

**Course 5603**

**Course 5603 Essay Requirement**

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## **POLICY DEVELOPMENT UNDER FIRE -- Explaining How U.S. Forces May Serve Under Foreign Command**

***“Somalia’s agony underscores a more basic need[than food relief]: an effective, mobile UN peace-keeping force, strong enough to quell the warlords.”*<sup>1</sup> — The New York Times “The Hell Called Somalia”**

### **INTRODUCTION**

At the end of the Cold War, President Bush proclaimed a “New world order ”<sup>1</sup> Considering this new order, many nations, too include the United States, thought the United Nation’s (UN) could play a larger role in solving world calamities and anarchic conditions This was especially true for UN peace-keeping operations

While on the campaign trail, candidate Bill Clinton joined the chorus calling for a greater UN role in the post cold war era He suggested establishing a UN “rapid deployment force”<sup>2</sup> that would stand guard “at the border of countries threatened by aggression preventing mass violence against civilian populations and combating terrorism.”<sup>3</sup> His words produced images of a force similar to that in the above New York Times quote As one of the first acts of his administration, President Clinton set out to draft a United States (U S ) peace-keeping policy in that view

However, after fourteen months of arduous, interagency rewriting and leaking to the press, the Clinton administration had failed to produce a U S peace-keeping policy consistent with this view . It had also developed a greater skepticism about the UN’s ability to effectively address peace-keeping missions all together The Clinton administration’s change of view was driven by popular disagreement with one of the policy’s key features -- the placement of U S forces under foreign command during UN peacekeeping operations The Clinton administration’s policy reform became a victim of partisan and bureaucratic politics Policy makers failed to foresee how domestic opinion towards their policy to place U S. forces under

foreign command would decrease amidst growing American casualties in current peacekeeping operations

How did the administration's effort to craft a peace-keeping policy become overshadowed by the issue of putting U S forces under foreign command? What precipitated the change in the administration views and caused it to replace the foreign command issue with a concept called "operational control?"<sup>4</sup> This paper describes the process and bureaucratic context in which this policy was developed

## **PRELUDE TO CHANGE**

Several factors set the conditions for President Clinton to change the U S peace-keeping policy Growing world sentiment for a greater UN role was first among these A Spring 1991 Foreign Affairs' article captured that predilection

"The use of military force by the UN for enforcement and peacekeeping purposes is essential to the new world order envisioned by presidents Bush and Gorbachev Both leaders foresee a world order founded on collective security The Persian Gulf War provided a model of how the UN could be involved in maintaining international security Alternative procedures might allow national forces to be brought together under a unified UN command, or they might have each member country maintain units in its armed forces that are earmarked for UN services Such procedures are not without their problems, but the opportunity to achieve a new level of collective security should not be missed "<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, conditions were set by the fact that the UN's participation in peace-keeping operations had risen significantly during the periods prior to the end of the Cold War and just

after Desert Storm. The UN averaged five peace-keeping operations annually during the period referred to as the Reagan buildup. However, between 1988 and 1992, the percentage of new UN peace-keeping operation increased from a low of 28% in 1988 to a 55% high in 1991. At the end of 1992, six of the thirteen peace-keeping operations the UN had underway involved U.S. forces.<sup>6</sup>

Thirdly, it was conditioned by prior decisions and actions of President George Bush. He gave strong support for a more assertive multilateral U.S. policy during his final address to the UN in September 1992. In it he stated, "As much as the United Nations has done [in peace-keeping] it can do much more. Effective multinational action will require coordinated command and control. Let me assure you the United States is ready to do its part to strengthen world peace by strengthening international peace-keeping. I have directed the United States Secretary of Defense to place a new emphasis on peace-keeping."<sup>7</sup> Yet, it was his selection of the "Sledgehammer"<sup>8</sup> plus option for intervening in Somalia that most influenced the Clinton administration's attempt at peace-keeping reform. In an instance of uncommon bureaucratic unity, the White House, Department of State and Department of Defense agreed that U.S. intervention in Somalia would be an "easy litmus test for a policy of assertive multilateralism in addressing destabilizing wars and state collapse in the post-Cold War era."<sup>9</sup> Ironically though, this decision became the progenitor of the series of events that would eventually eclipse the entire policy reform effort.

When President Clinton, on inaugural day, "spoke positively about multilateral action to address international problems,"<sup>10</sup> all the bureaucratic stars for policy reform became aligned. Changing U.S. peace-keeping policy based on multilateralism, a greater UN role, under whose command U.S. forces might serve, was imminent. Yet, despite all the optimism surrounding policy reform and the inauguration, one U.S. Marine was killed in Somalia on January 12th. Tom

Post, in a Newsweek article entitled “Somalia First Blood,”<sup>11</sup> wrote, “Operation Restore Hope is getting messier by the day, as U.S. troops come under fire by Somalia gunmen ”<sup>12</sup> Unknowingly, his words recorded the first of the 26 American deaths to occur in the UN led Somalia peace-keeping operation. It was the loss of these American lives that would cause Congress and Americans to attack the policy reform feature that would put U.S. forces under foreign command

## **THE BUREAUCRATIC STRUGGLE (April 1992- May 3, 1994)**

### **Building The First Draft - Presidential Decision Directive 13**

In February 1993, the Clinton administration established a National Security Staff (NSC) drafting group to review the United States’ role in peace-keeping operations and ways of improving UN operations in this area. As this group set out to write Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 13, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and Madeleine Albright, American Ambassador to the United Nations, spoke widely for “greater U.S. multilateral engagement”<sup>13</sup> and “the need of U.S. leadership among collective bodies,”<sup>14</sup> in particular the UN. Even as they were advancing the multilateral policy, in June 1993, the press brought to American living rooms - in a style reminiscent of Vietnam - news of twenty three Pakistani peace-keepers who were killed in Somalia under UN command.

A month later, in July 1993, the first draft of the policy was completed and internally distributed. It mostly expanded on previous policy and looked at ways to “strengthen the U.S.’s contribution ”<sup>15</sup> It stated a “willingness to have U.S. forces to serve under UN control in peace-keeping operations.”<sup>16</sup> It also allowed U.S. commanders operating under UN control not to comply with orders they believe to be outside the “mandate of the mission or military imprudent or unsound ”<sup>17</sup> **But most importantly, it reflected no political acuity for the possible**

**congressional and public dissent to the command issue given the UN's deteriorating performance in Somalia and Bosnia.**

**Bureaucratic Response (Who they were and what they thought)**

The initial draft of PPD 13 was attacked from multiple bureaucratic directions for its command feature. The real world U S and Pakistani casualties in Somalia were leading many to question the assumptions about the UN's role in the new world order. U S citizens were witnessing by the UN's continual inability to deal with the situation in Bosnia and the growing death count in Somalia. Some unpleasant realities of the new world order had begun to take better shape. Quick, no cost solution was one of them.

Congress -- that "collegial body of shifting majorities, carrying out constitutional responsibilities, challenging the executive branch, passing legislation and making policy"<sup>18</sup> -- attacked the draft policy in terms of its "purpose, motive and interests"<sup>19</sup>. By this time, the Republican dominated Congress had become more politically sensitized by the "messier" conditions of Somalia. The twenty-three Pakistani peace-keepers killed under UN command in Somalia only accentuated it. General reaction was summed up by Senator Robert Byrd in an August 1993 New York Times article entitled, "The Perils of peacekeeping"<sup>20</sup>. He said,

"Before the Clinton administration adopt any directive embracing an expanded role in UN peacekeeping operations, *Congress should be allowed to debate this policy* thoroughly. Such a plan would mean that the U S would face the prospect of both sending troops into battle *under foreign command* and becoming militarily involved in operations that Americans do not properly understand or support"<sup>21</sup>

The policy's foreign command provision was seized by the Republican led Congress and became a political tool for attacking the President's policy as unsound in Somalia and Bosnia

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali expressed very strong concern about the part in the policy that said U S commanders could not comply to UN orders He stated allowing such a policy "would set a precedent whereby other nations would do the same thus undermining the concept of a UN command "22

Public reaction and discontent over U S troops serving under UN control drew comments from the policy elite and average citizen In a Forbes feature article, former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger said,

"As long as there are well - defined goals, U S forces engaged in UN peacekeeping efforts have shown commendable success Without such goals, however, U S forces involved in these efforts have been dangerously vulnerable Unfortunately, the current crisis in Bosnia and Somalia are looking more and more like the latter case UN Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali is no military leader, and his command of the UN's multinational force in Somalia Is a disaster waiting to happen As long as the Clinton administration remains chained to a policy of multilateralism, its foreign policy will continue to be inadequate "23

In the editorial section of the San Diego Union-Tribune, Mr Paul L Evans from La Jolla, Ca summarized what average Americans said "U S troops should not be place under UN command Like million of citizens, I oppose putting our military under UN command, and I am neither an isolationist nor a unilateralist I am an American first and foremost and proud of it "24

The next volley of real world events to impact PDD 13's command feature came in August 1993 when four more U S soldiers were killed in Somalia by remote mines By



September 1993, support for continued expansion of UN peace-keeping and for U S support for this activity had greatly diminished. It was in this month that Secretary Warren Christopher redrafted PDD 13. In the rewriting, he created a list of criteria to determine U S support for peace-keeping operations, and limited the situations in which U S troops would serve under UN operational control. He also removed the “imprudent and unsound”<sup>25</sup> basis by which U S commanders could non-comply with UN orders. “Orders were now to be appealed up the UN chain of command and then to the appropriate U S commanders”<sup>26</sup>

As a result of a leak to The New York Times in September, Secretary of State Christopher’s rewrite did not go unnoticed. Unnamed officials, according to the New York Times, “reported that top national security advisers to President Clinton have not been able to agree on what role the United States should play in peace enforcement operations around the world. According to the officials, the Clinton administration is moving away from a proposal which would allow American troops to be put under United Nations command in peace-keeping operations”<sup>27</sup>

Retrospectively one can see how the substance of Secretary Christopher’s rewrite was beginning to reflect in the way the Clinton administration dealt with the growing problem in Bosnia as well as public dislike for the foreign command issue. On 12 September, The New York Times reported President Clinton’s statement that “he would send American peacekeeping troops to Bosnia and Herzegovina only if the operation is under NATO’s not the UN’s control”<sup>28</sup>. The president’s comments caused a dispute with Britain and France on one side of the Bosnian issue and the U S on the other. However, not even these faint glimpses of change in the administration’s policy swayed Congressional discontent with the policy. Senator Bob Dole, soon to be presidential candidate, introduced the Peace Powers act of 1994 in Congress. Under

the bill, “No U S troops could be placed under UN command or operational control unless approved by Congress U S forces could continue to report independently to U S commanders, and the U S could be withdrawn at anytime ” It also called for “Reducing the U S share of peacekeeping operations from 30% to 25% ”<sup>29</sup>

On 23 September, during a speech at the National War College, U S Ambassador Madeleine Albright gave the first semi-official hint of a change in policy view . She announced that perhaps a more “limited view”<sup>30</sup> of peace-keeping operations was needed She went on to “criticize UN management calling for the UN decision making process [to] be overhauled ”<sup>31</sup> Even as Ambassador Albright gave her speech to the National War College, three U S helicopters were shot down in Somalia. Three more American servicemen died giving Americans more reasons to dislike a policy that puts U S forces under foreign command

President Clinton, in a 27 September speech to the UN General Assembly, made official what the National Review called a “damping”<sup>32</sup> of its initial enthusiasm for multilateralism In his speech President Clinton said the “UN must know when to say no ”<sup>33</sup> He also outlined “criteria for the participation of U S forces in UN peacekeeping missions He sought to quiet concerns over the “policy involving the placement of U S forces under UN command [that] was emerging within the administration until a leak prompted sharp congressional reaction ”<sup>34</sup> His message clearly marked the administration’s break with its policy that supported an aggressive role by the UN in peace-keeping operations Three days later, on October 3, 1993, the policy provision that would allow U S. forces to serve under foreign command was destroyed by the same fire that killed 18 and wounded 75 U S Rangers in Somalia The total number of Americans killed in the UN led Somalia operation was now 26 . President Clinton, on 7 October, announced a “short term increase in U S. forces with pull out by 31 March 94 ”<sup>35</sup>

## **The Final Policy - Presidential Decision Directive 25**

In March 1994, the NSC staff began briefing the final contents of PDD 13 to Congress. About the same time, Anthony Lake, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, published an article in The New York Times. Its title, "The Limits of Peacekeeping,"<sup>36</sup> aptly characterized the final policy signed by President Clinton on May 5, 1994. PDD 25, *Elements of the Clinton Administration's Policy for Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations*, provided a disciplined list of six criteria that would guide U.S. entry into peacekeeping operations, and various objectives for reengineering UN peacekeeping activities, and reducing UN costs. It provided an unequivocal statement that the president "will never relinquish command authority over U.S. forces."<sup>37</sup> Instead, "on a case by case basis, the president will consider placing appropriate U.S. forces under the operational control of a competent UN commander for a specific UN operations authorized by the Security Council."<sup>38</sup>

The Joint Staff was "never really comfortable"<sup>39</sup> with the term operational control. LTG Wesley K. Clarke, U.S. Army Director for Strategic Plans and Policy (J5) said "by command what we're speaking of is the constitutional authority to establish and deploy forces. Operational control is a subset of command. Given for a specific time frame, mission and location."<sup>40</sup> This clearly was a semantic distinction based upon the president's constitutional powers as Commander In Chief.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The process out of which PDD 25 emerged on May 5, 1995 affirms that policy making is a result of compromise, organizational dynamics, individual personalities and political consequences.

caused by real world events Benjamin Wittes best described the process results in The New Leader's article titled "The Politics of peace-keeping"<sup>41</sup> In it, he states,

"President Clinton's recent policy document on international peacekeeping has more to do with domestic politics than with foreign affairs Clinton list six conditions that must be satisfied before the U S will support the deployment of UN peacekeepers Some of these conditions make sense, but others are irrelevant His directive is intended primarily to reassure the American people and Congress, who have expressed concern over the deaths of American soldiers under UN command in Somalia, tentative plans to send a large force into the former Yugoslavia, and the high percentage of peacekeeping budgets paid by the U S"<sup>42</sup>

The NCS staff drafting group developed and published a peacekeeping policy that did not consider current peacekeeping events and the domestic response to them The UN's terrible performance in Somalia widely influenced public and Congressional opinion and actions

Faced by bureaucratic criticism to putting U S troops under foreign command, President Clinton subscribed to a policy that makes a tenuous semantic distinction between "command" and "operational control" This type of distinction confounds the more technical and appropriate definitions in joint, operational and tactical manuals Its potential for adding "friction" to future peace-keeping operations is very high

Bottom-line, the Clinton administration attempted to reform U S peacekeeping policy so that it would be consistent with the post Cold War realities at home and abroad However, as the UN's efforts at peacekeeping came under fire, both literally and figuratively, so did the administration's policy for putting U S forces under foreign command

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## ENDNOTES:

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<sup>35</sup> Ken Menkhaus w/ Louis Ortmayer, "Key Decisions in the Somalia Intervention," Washington Pew Case Studies in International Affairs Case 464, 1995, p 20-21

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid , p A 37

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